

REMARKS

Applicants have studied the Office Action dated June 1, 2006 and have made amendments to the claims. It is submitted that the application, as amended, is in condition for allowance. Claims 1-20 are pending. Claims 1-3, 6-12, 15, 16, 18, and 19 have been amended. Reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims in view of the above amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 11, 12-15, 19, and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Masters et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,199,252). Claims 2 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Masters et al. in view of Nagel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,062,649). Claims 3, 8, 10, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Masters et al. in view of Jay et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,647,637). Claims 4, 5, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Masters et al. in view of Rowland (U.S. Patent No. 4,318,556). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The present invention is directed to an improved backrest for an automobile vehicle seat. One embodiment provides a backrest that includes a framework, a padding, a padding cover, a screen for a rear face of the backrest, and a rigid back panel shield frame. The padding cover covers the padding and a front face and sides of the backrest, and covers at least a portion of the back panel shield frame. The back panel shield frame is a frame with at least two lateral sides, a bottom side, and a central opening. The back panel shield frame is attached to the rear side of the framework of the backrest so as to cover lateral edges of the framework and a bottom part of the rear side of the framework of the backrest. The back panel shield frame includes towards an inner edge at least one groove adapted to accommodate and hold an edge of the padding cover and an edge of the screen.

Because such a rigid back panel shield frame is attached to the rear side of the framework of the backrest, there can be eliminated the volumes of padding foam that are conventionally required to define the shapes and the style of the seat. Additionally, attaching such a back panel

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shield frame to the rear side of the framework allows symmetrical shapes to be easily obtained for the two sides of the backrest even if the framework does not have such a symmetry, provides great freedom in the design, and allows accurate positioning of the screen to be ensured in relation to the framework so as to provide more space for the knees of the rear passenger. See specification at 2:33-3:12.

The Masters reference is directed to a modular seat assembly for use in multiple vehicle platforms. However, Masters does not disclose a backrest of a seat that includes a framework, a padding cover covering a padding and a front face and sides of the backrest, and a rigid back panel shield frame that is a frame with at least two lateral sides, a bottom side, and a central opening, with the back panel shield frame being attached to the rear side of the framework of the backrest so as to cover lateral edges of the framework and a bottom part of the rear side of the framework of the backrest, as is recited in amended claim 1. Amended claim 15 contains similar recitations.

Masters discloses a modular seat assembly with a backrest that has a framework 70 and 72 formed with a solid rear face, as shown in Figures 3-5. A back cover 113 and 136 is applied directly to the solid framework so as to not allow any flexibility of this back cover. The backrest of Masters also has a support member 108 and 130 in the form of a solid contoured plate that is attached to the front face of the framework 70 and 72. See Masters at 6:5-6. Padding 110 is sandwiched between the cover 112 and the solid support member 108. The backrest of Masters lacks any "back panel shield frame" in the form of a frame with an opening that is attached to the rear side of the framework and covers at least part of the rear side of the framework.

In contrast, embodiments of the present invention provide a backrest that includes a framework, and a back panel shield frame that is attached to the rear side of the framework of the backrest so as to cover a bottom part of the rear side of the framework of the backrest. The back panel shield frame is a frame with at least two lateral sides, a bottom side, and a central opening. Additionally, the back panel shield frame includes towards an inner edge at least one groove

adapted to accommodate and hold an edge of a padding cover that covers the padding and a front face and sides of the backrest and to hold an edge of a screen for a rear face of the backrest. The padding is located between the padding cover and the suspension mat.

Thus, while the support member of Masters is attached to the front face of the framework of the backrest, the back panel shield frame of the present invention is attached to the rear face of the framework so as to cover at least a portion of the rear side of the framework (e.g., a bottom part of the rear side of the framework). Further, while the support member of Masters is a solid contoured plate, the back panel shield frame of the present invention is in the form of a frame with sides and a central opening. This "frame" construction is clear in the figures, especially in Figure 2 along with the cross-sections of Figures 2a and 2b. See also specification at 3:34-4:2; 4:27-29.¹

Because a rigid back panel shield frame with sides and a central opening is attached to the rear side of the framework of the backrest, there can be eliminated the volumes of padding foam that are conventionally required to define the shapes and the style of the seat. Additionally, attaching such a back panel shield frame to the rear side of the framework allows symmetrical shapes to be easily obtained for the two sides of the backrest even if the framework does not have such a symmetry, provides great freedom in the design, and allows accurate positioning of the screen to be ensured in relation to the framework so as to provide more space for the knees of the rear passenger. See specification at 2:33-3:12.

Applicant believes that the differences between Masters and the present invention are clear in amended claims 1 and 15, which set forth various embodiments of the present invention.

¹ Additionally, the "inner edge" of the shield frame that is recited in the claims and described in the specification is the inside edge of the shield frame that defines the central opening. Otherwise, it would not be an "edge". Further, the priority document that was incorporated by reference uses the French word "cadre" was used for the "frame" of the shield frame. The word "cadre" implicitly defines a central opening in the structure of the shield frame. Thus, from the specification and drawings, it is clear that the shield frame is in the form of a frame with sides and a central opening.

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Therefore, claims 1 and 15 distinguish over the Masters reference, and the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) should be withdrawn.

As discussed above, amended claims 1 and 15 distinguish over the Masters reference. Further, the claimed features of the present invention are not realized even if the teachings of Nagel, Jay, or Rowland are incorporated into Masters. None of Nagel, Jay, or Rowland teaches or suggests the claimed features of the present invention that are absent from Masters. Thus, claims 1 and 15 distinguish over the Masters, Nagel, Jay, and Rowland references, and thus, claims 2-5, 8, and 10-14, and claims 16-20 (which depend from claim 1 and 15, respectively) also distinguish over the Masters, Nagel, Jay, and Rowland references. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-5, 8, and 10-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) should be withdrawn.

Further, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is a generic claim. It is also submitted that generic claim 1 is allowable over the art of record, and thus claims 6, 7, and 9 depending therefrom should also be considered and allowed.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the application and the claims are in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application, as amended, are requested.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (561) 989-9811 should the Examiner believe a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the application.

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